

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

The approach of the present invention is called optical word recognition (OWR). The present invention advantageously uses techniques to search for arbitrary textual information contained in imaged documents. The result is a significant advance in high-speed search for textual information within imaged documents. The optical apparatus includes a generating unit for synthetically generating textual patterns as signal templates. The optical apparatus has a compensating unit for compensating, if necessary, for visual differences between the synthetically generated textual patterns and images being compared against the synthetically generated images. The optical apparatus has a comparing unit for comparing compensated images against images in a database.